

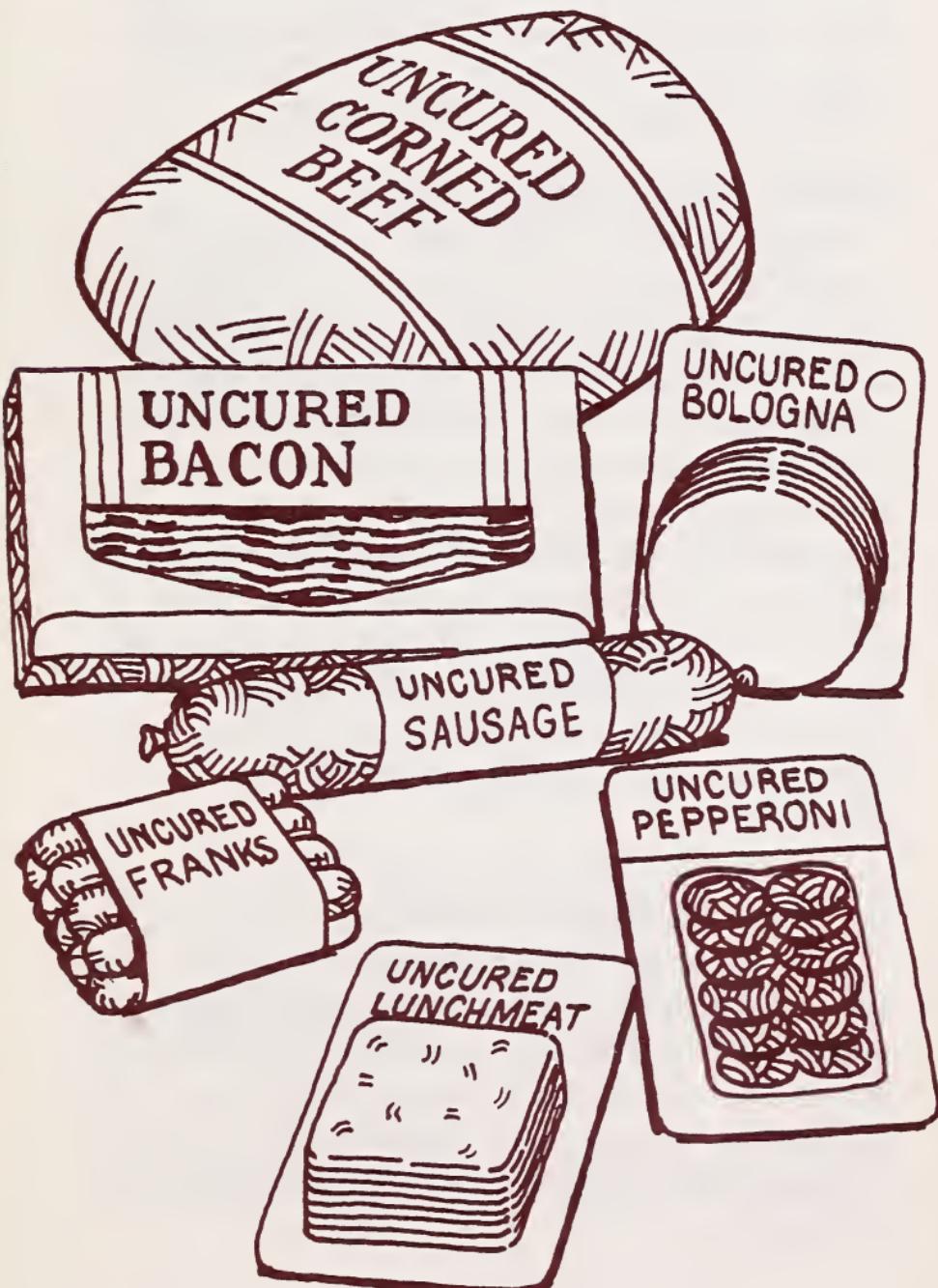
Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

No-Nitrite Meats

Ag84Pro
C. 3

Handle Carefully



No-Nitrite Meats Handle Carefully

Frankfurter, salami, bacon

You know just what to expect when you buy one of these products—what it looks like, what it will taste like, and how long you can keep it in your refrigerator.

That's because these meat products must be made according to rules set up by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA rules make sure the bacon, frankfurters, and salami you buy are what you expect them to be. In fact, people who make these meat products can't use those names unless they make the products according to the USDA rules.

Nitrite used to cure meat

Products with names like "salami" or "bologna" must be preserved or "cured." Curing is a way of preparing meat to make it stay safe to eat for a longer time than fresh meat. Nitrite is used most often to cure products like bologna, frankfurters, bacon, and salami. The nitrite not only acts as a preservative but helps give these products their distinctive color and taste. But more important, it helps to stop germs from growing in these meats—germs that can cause botulism. **Botulism is a food poisoning that is so serious that you can die from it.**

Questions about nitrite

But some people are questioning the safety of nitrite. They are concerned that additives such as nitrite may be harmful in some way to people's health. Others are concerned about initial reports that nitrite may even be a cause of cancer in laboratory animals.

Products without nitrite — UNCURED

So some consumers and meat processors have asked USDA to change the rules so they can have bologna, bacon, frankfurters, and other cured meats *without nitrite*, but still called by those names. These products will look and taste much like the bologna and bacon you are used to. But because they don't have nitrite, these products—unless frozen or otherwise preserved—*will not stay safe to eat as long as bologna and bacon made with nitrite*.

USDA did change the rules, but with one important difference.

So that you will be able to see right away which frankfurters and bologna don't have nitrite, and know they won't keep as long as products with nitrite, the new rules say the products without nitrite must be called "UNCURED." Labels for these products will read: "UNCURED FRANKFURTERS," "UNCURED BOLOGNA," "UNCURED BACON," or "UNCURED SALAMI."

UNCURED FRANKS

NO NITRATE OR NITRITE
ADDED. NOT PRESERVED—
KEEP REFRIGERATED
BELOW 40° F AT ALL TIMES

When you see the word “UNCURED,” that means you must take care of the products just as you would fresh meat like ground beef or fresh pork. You can keep UNCURED BOLOGNA, BACON, FRANKFURTERS in the refrigerator only 4 to 7 days, not 2 to 3 weeks as you can keep bacon, bologna, and franks with nitrite.

Labels carrying warning

The new rules also say the labels of UNCURED meat products must carry a warning: “No Nitrate or Nitrite Added. Not Preserved—Keep Refrigerated Below 40° F At All Times.”

So remember, if you buy UNCURED BACON, UNCURED BOLOGNA, UNCURED FRANKFURTERS:

- Keep it refrigerated.
- Don’t let it sit on the table or kitchen counter.
- Don’t pack UNCURED BOLOGNA sandwiches in a brown bag lunch UNLESS you can keep them cold until lunch time.

Tips on the back of this flyer tell you how you can safely use UNCURED FRANKFURTERS and UNCURED BOLOGNA on picnics and in brown bag lunches.

To protect your family and yourself from food poisoning, handle these new UNCURED products with old names as carefully as you do raw meat.

Tips for Handling Uncured Meats

- Select meats just before leaving store.
- Have cold products sacked together so they stay cool longer.
- Go home directly to refrigerate the products.
- **Use meat within 4 to 7 days** or follow storage instructions on the labels of packaged meats.
- If you want to freeze the meat, leave it in factory packaging or wrap tightly in moisture-resistant material such as aluminum foil or freezer paper.
- Defrost meat in the refrigerator or—for a quicker method—immerse the package in its watertight wrapper in cold water.
- If products are to be cooked, cook them thoroughly or according to package instructions.

UNCURED BACON

NO NITRATE OR NITRITE
ADDED. NOT PRESERVED—
KEEP REFRIGERATED
BELOW 40° F AT ALL TIMES

Tips for Handling Uncured Meat Products

- Select meats just before leaving store.
- Have cold products sacked together so they stay cool longer.
- Go home directly to refrigerate the products.
- **Use meat within 4 to 7 days** or follow storage instructions on the labels of packaged meats.
- If you want to freeze the meat, leave it in factory packaging or wrap tightly in moisture-resistant material such as aluminum foil or freezer paper.
- Defrost meat in the refrigerator or—for a quicker method—immerse the package in its watertight wrapper in cold water.
- If products are to be cooked, cook them thoroughly or according to package instructions.
- **Refrigerate leftovers promptly** and use within 3 to 4 days.
- If you are going on a picnic, carry food products in a well-insulated cooler with plenty of ice. Leave cooler in a shady spot so ice will not melt too fast. Do not open cooler unnecessarily. Put leftovers back into cooler right away. Be sure sufficient ice is in the cooler to keep leftover meat cold until you get home.
- **To pack a safe "brown bag" lunch**, use one of these methods: Prepare and freeze the meat sandwich the evening before . . . it will thaw in time for lunch. Pack sandwich in a small insulated container such as the commercially available foam plastic. Double wrap the sandwich and pack it with a cold piece of fruit or cold can of juice. Put a cold device into the lunchbag. The device might be a commercial freezer gel, a plastic bag filled with ice cubes, or a cleaned-out margarine tub that you have filled with water and frozen.

UNCURED BACON

NO NITRATE OR NITRITE
ADDED. NOT PRESERVED—
KEEP REFRIGERATED
BELOW 40° F AT ALL TIMES

For further information, write:

Director, Meat and Poultry Standards and
Labeling Division, FSQS, U.S. Department of
Agriculture, Room 202 Annex Building,
Washington, D.C. 20250.

